

Songwriter's ode to heaven tops charts

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—A song about ascending to heaven written by a dying 18-year-old drew 7.7 million YouTube hits and at one point reached No. 1 on the iTunes music charts.

Zach Sobiech, who died in late May, wrote the farewell song "[Clouds](#)" as an ode, in part, to his unwavering faith in God.

He is remembered for [providing hope](#) to people around the world, many of them facing similar situations.

His fight with osteosarcoma, a rare bone cancer, led to the release of an entire album of his songs, *Fix Me Up*, not long before his death and prompted other musicians to perform their own versions of "Clouds."

Near the end, Sobiech found the strength to fly to New York to finalize a record deal through Broadcast Music Inc.

A version of "Clouds" featuring Jason Mraz, The Lumineers and American Idol winner Phillip Phillips drew high praise from *People* magazine, which called that remake perhaps "the most moving celebrity shout-out of all time."

Sobiech's story helped raise more than \$100,000 for cancer research into osteosarcoma.

Scores of people wrote the teen, saying how much his words meant to them. They include a Gulf War veteran with post-traumatic stress disorder, a concert pianist from South Korea and Japanese schoolchildren.

The funeral for Sobiech was held at St. Michael's Catholic Church in Stillwater, Minn., where he and his family have been members 20 years.

"Our faith kept us from despair and kept our eyes focused on what is truly important—eternity," Sobiech's mother, Laura, said.

Mike Miller, who helped conduct the funeral, said Sobiech's music touched "people who were in a very dark place."

This is Sobiech's journey, told through the words of "Clouds":

Well I fell down, down, down

Into this dark and lonely hole

There was no one there to care about me anymore

And I needed a way to climb and grab ahold of the edge

You were sitting there holding a rope

And we'll go up, up, up

But I'll fly a little higher

We'll go up in the clouds because the view is a little nicer

Up here my dear

It won't be long now, it won't be long now.